Emiquon Preserve
A Case Study in Collaboratively Restoring Floodplains

US Army Corps of Engineers

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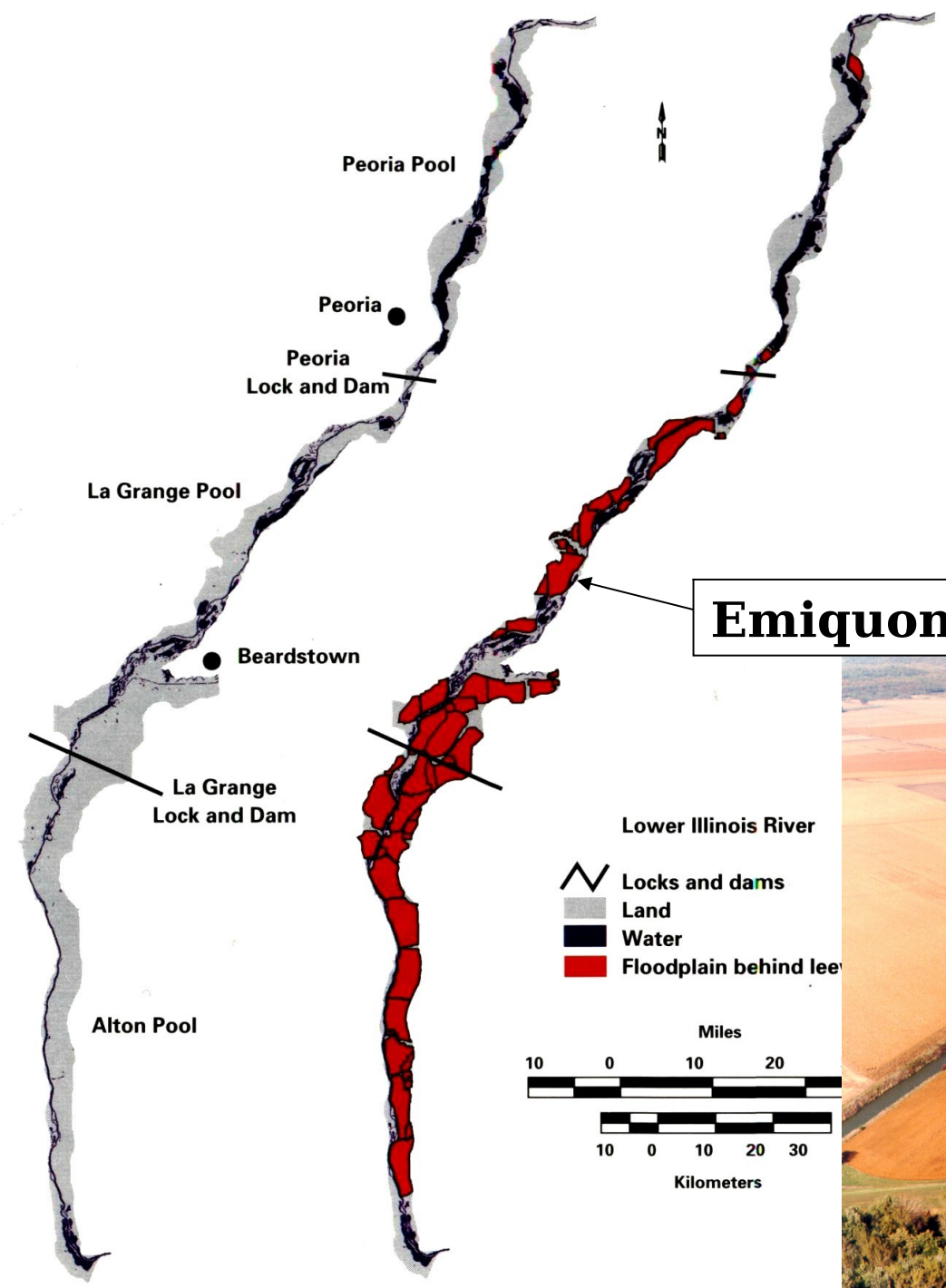
Rock Island District

May 21 – Session III

HOT PROPERTY
EMIQUON, ILLINOIS
The Mississippi, the Nile and other large-floodplain river systems are in poor health around the world. Levees and pollution have choked off wetlands and aquatic life. The National Research Council has identified as restorable only three large-floodplain river systems in North America. The Illinois River is one of them.
THE OPPORTUNITY
Last year, The Nature Conservancy acquired Emiquon, a 7,000-acre site that has the potential to change the future of the Illinois River Valley. Restoration at Emiquon, historically one of the Midwest's most biologically diverse and productive floodplains, is essential to restoring habitat for such plants as the decurrent false aster and for ancient fishes such as paddlefish and sturgeon. We now need $19 million to complete the purchase.
WHAT YOU CAN DO
Please send contributions to The Nature Conservancy, Dept. HP, 8 South Michigan Ave., Suite 900, Chicago, IL 60603, (312) 346-8163.
NATURE CONSERVANCY
JULY/AUGUST 2001
FIELDS OF Dreams
Restoring Natural Landscapes
50 YEARS OF SAVING GREAT PLACES
The Nature Conservancy

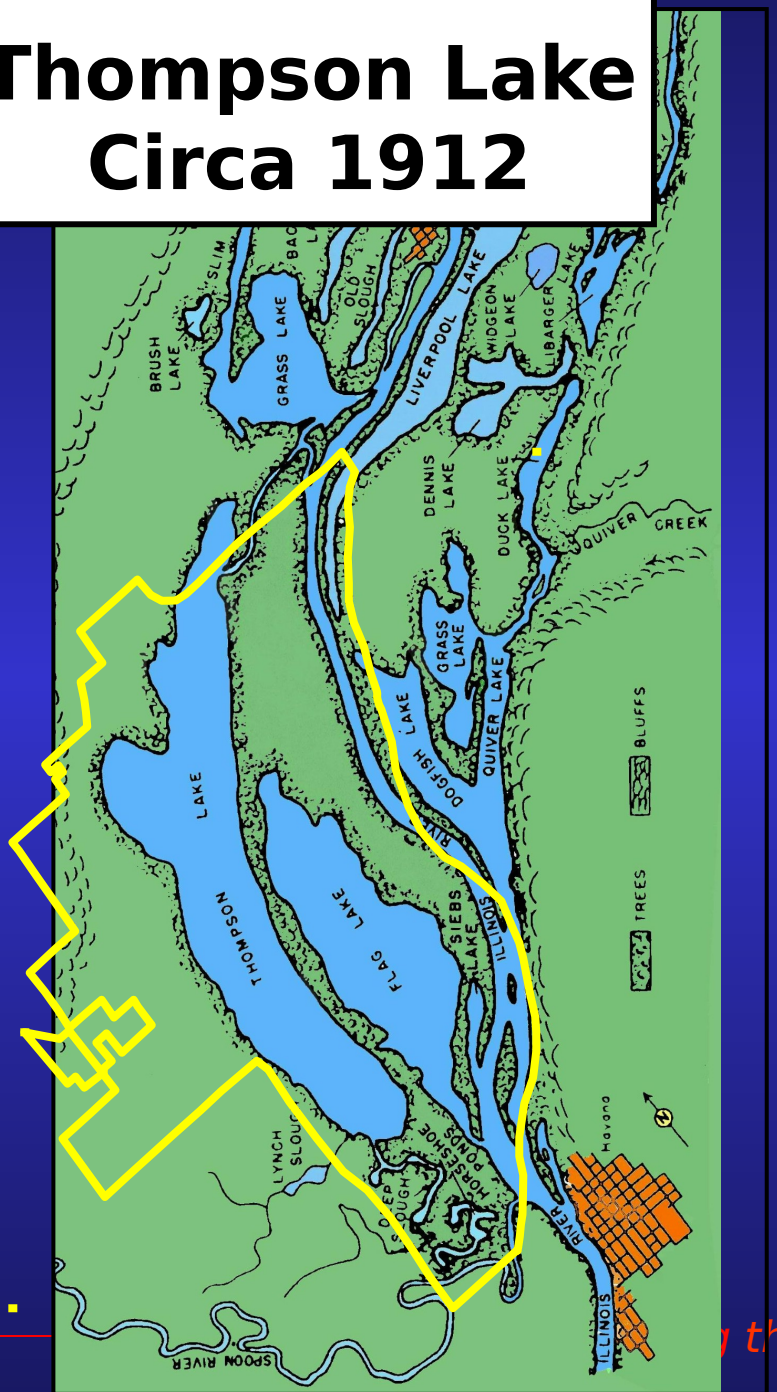
Large Floodplain Ecosystem / Flood Pulse

1902-1929 ~ 50% of Lower Illinois isolated behind Levees; [illegible] acres

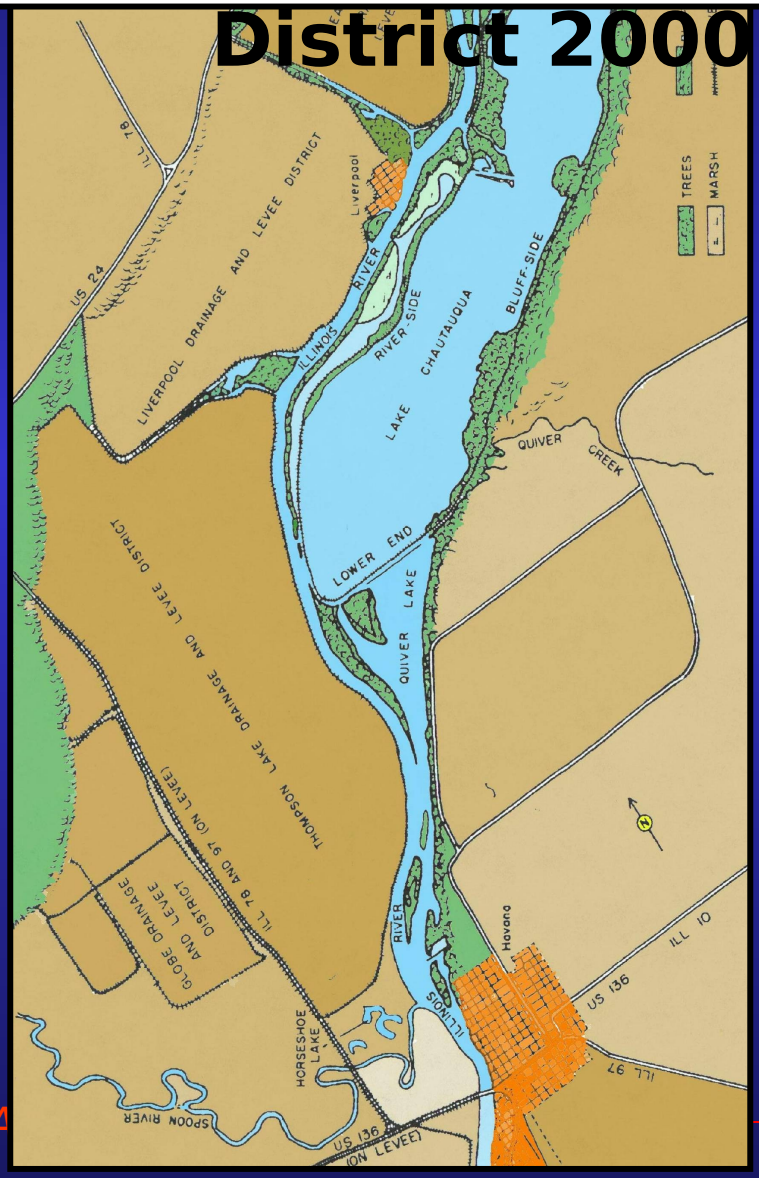


Emiquon Preserve, TNC

Thompson Lake Circa 1912



Thompson Lake Drainage and Levee District 2000



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Partnership Potential

- **TNC** – conservation planning, acquired land, key ecological attributes
- **NRCS** – WRP funding and technical support to do site planning and some restoration
- **Corps** – potential to provide connectivity, structural improvements
- **Others**
  - **IL DNR** – fish stocking and monitoring
  - **Caterpillar Corp** – providing funding

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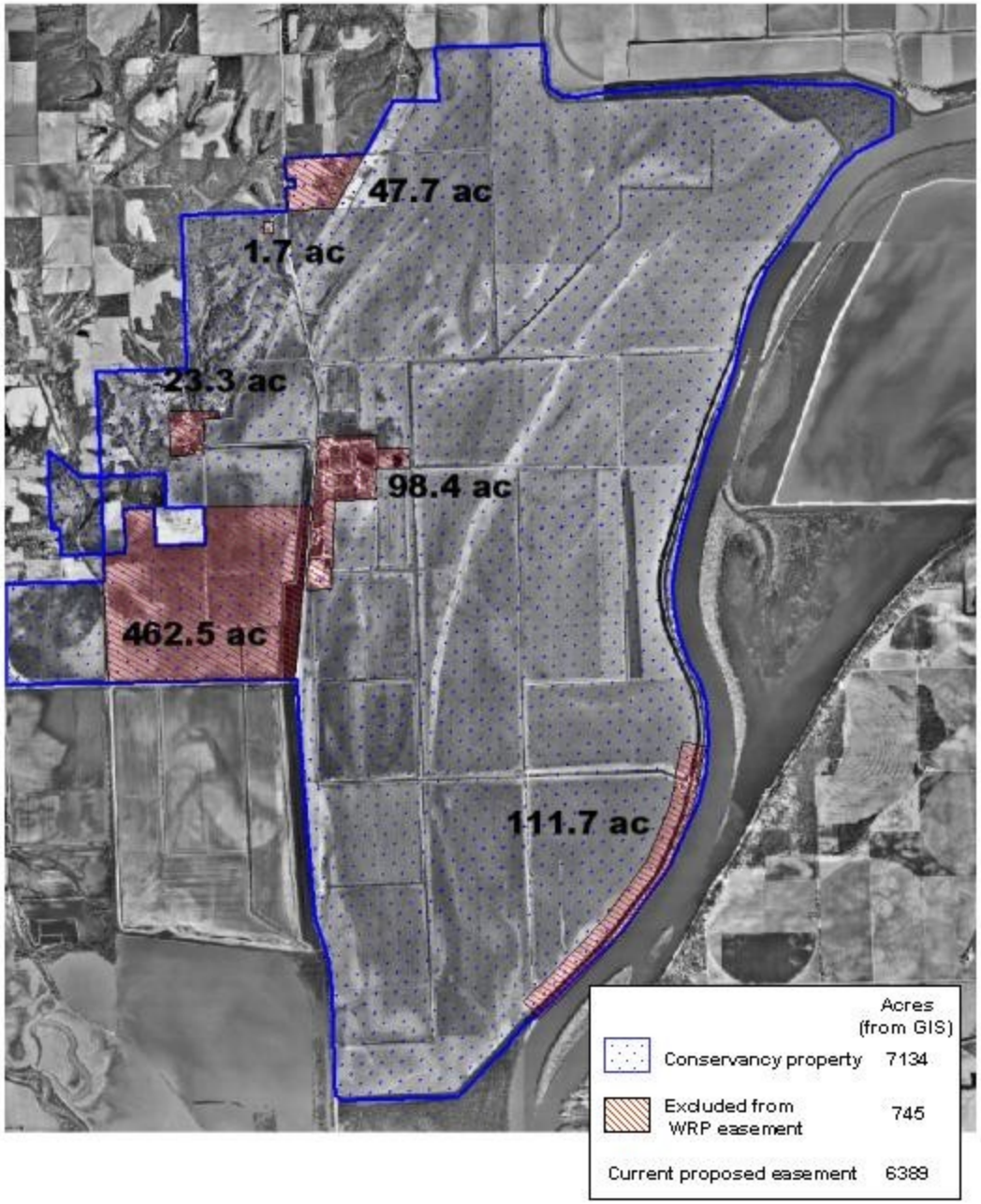
Quick History

- Amazingly productive historic site
- 7,100 acre - Landscape scale, leveed in 1924
- Purchased by TNC in late 1990s
- Enrolled in Wetland Reserve Program 2006

WRP Enrollment Area



NRCS & TNC

- Restoration Plan
- 1,200 acres of forest, prairie, and wetland plantings.
- 270,000 tree and shrub seedlings in the bottomland
- 8,000 pounds of seed containing 6 grasses and 85 forbs
- All features above 435 ft msl

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What is left to Do?

- Most WRP projects are done at this point

- Still Lacks River Connection
- Concerns with wetland hydrology and ability to mimic historic variability

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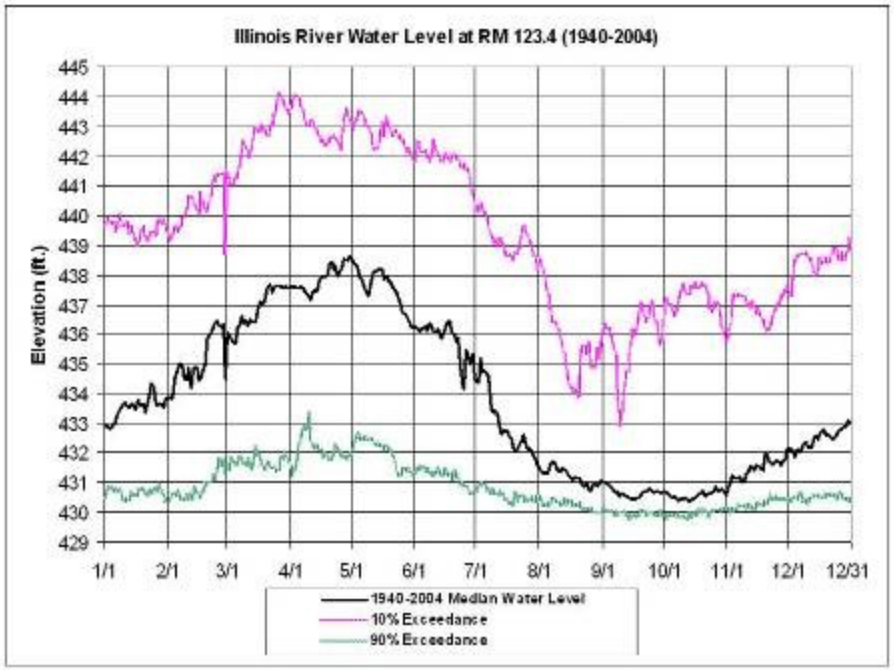
Goals & Objectives

GOAL

- Restore floodplain habitat



OBJECTIVES

- Restore hydrology and river connection
- Restore wetland vegetation
- Increase connectivity to nursery and spawning habitats
- Improve water c

Aquatic Area will Vary Year to Year

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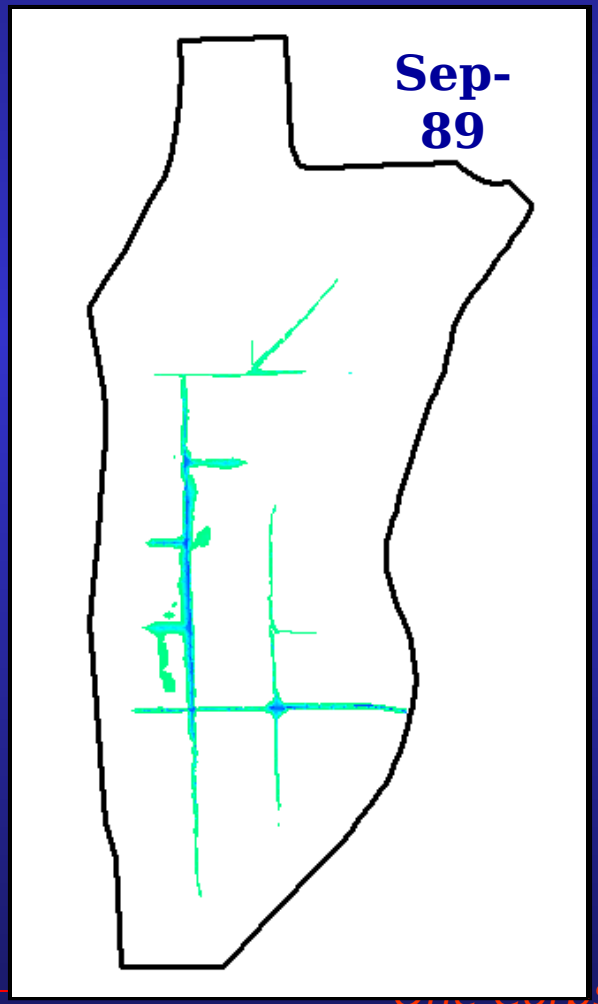
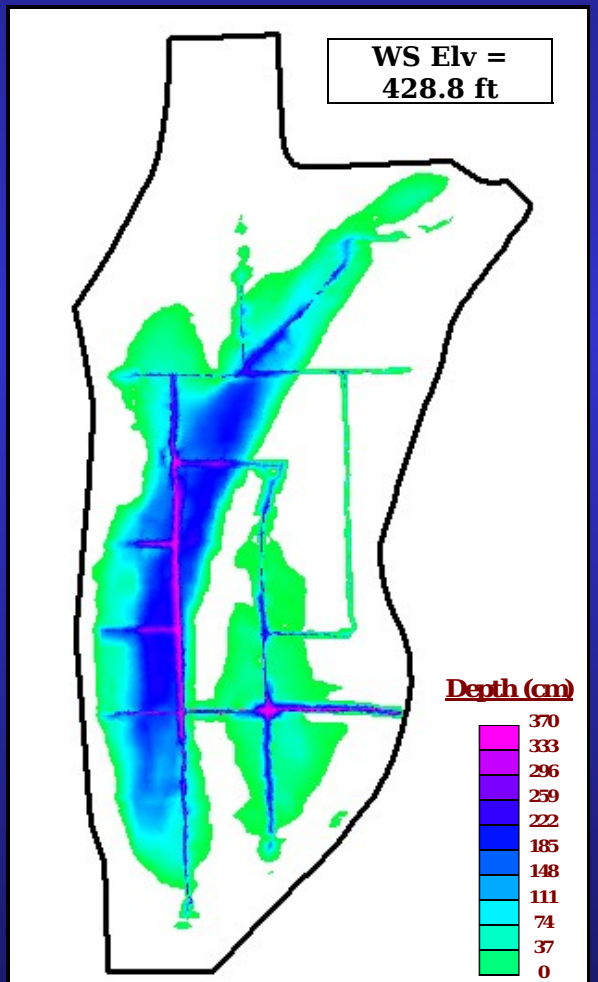
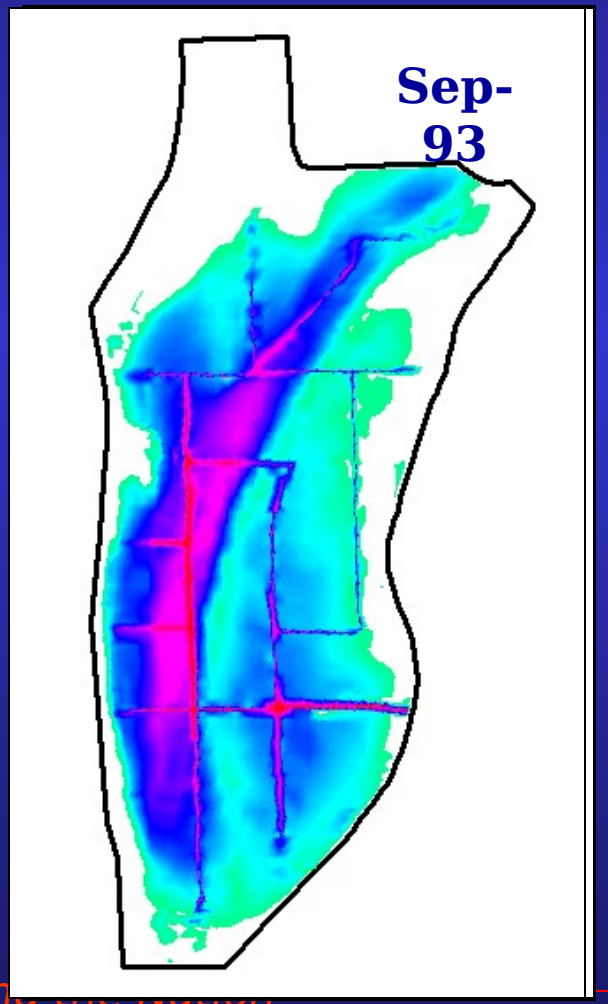
Dry Year (1989) | **Average Year** | **Wet Year (1993)**







Potential Features

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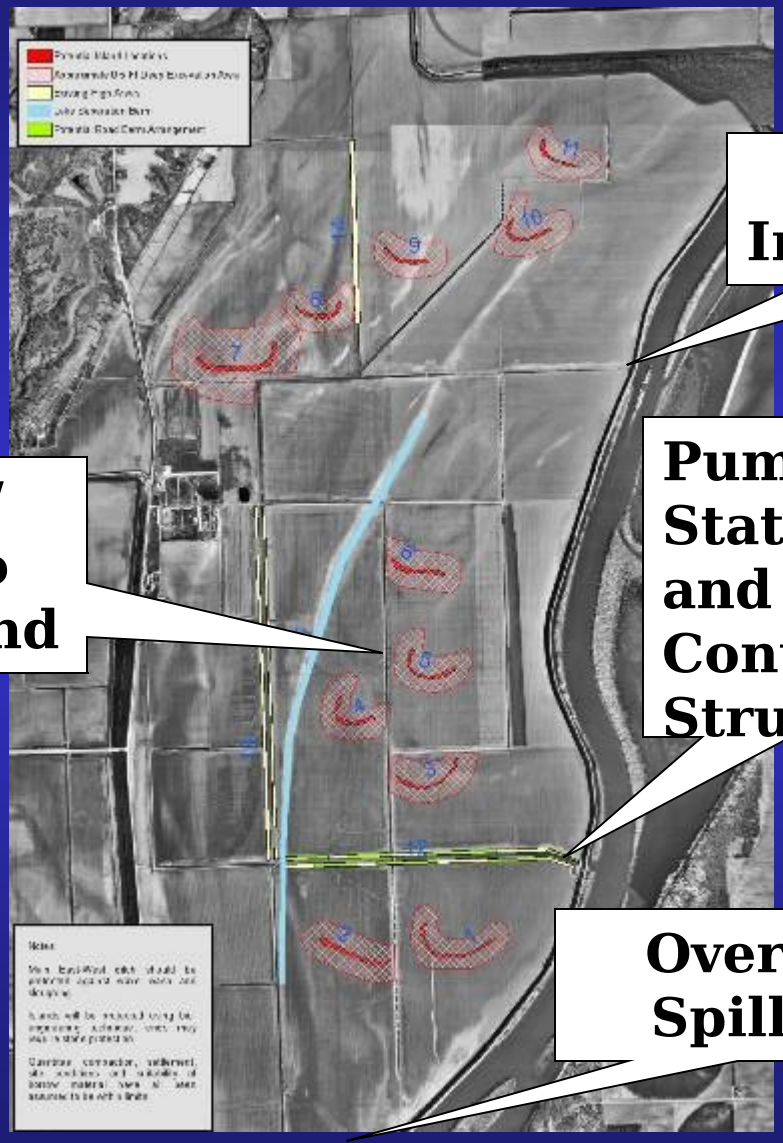

Levee Improvements

Pump Station and Water Control Structure

Islands / berms to reduce wind fetch

Overflow Spillway

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Close Fit with National Partnership Initiatives

- Executive Order 13352, Facilitation of Cooperative Conservation - August 26, 2004
- Corps Partnering Agreement with TNC
- National Partnering Agreement with NRCS
- New Collaborative EC

NRCS & Corps Partnership Agreement

- Partnership Agreement signed July 7, 2006.
- Among several purposes:
- To create and support three national teams to review existing authorities and programs, identify areas of concern and need for increased collaboration, and support implementation of actions identified for:
  - Wetland Creation, Restoration, and Enhancement
- To support and encourage the establishment of six to ten Field Implementation Teams to serve as pilot activities for implementing innovations, removing impediments to the NRCS/USACE partnership, and engaging and supporting local leadership in solving water and related natural recourses problems.

What Could Possibly Slow Progress? DETAILS

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- Differing initial views of Federal Agencies
  - What is the without project condition (groundwater)
  - Should the site be reconnected to the Illinois River
  - Invasive Species potential
- Real Estate Issues
  - Sponsor required to provide all LERRDs
  - WRP easement gave most rights to USDA/US for 30 yrs
  - Need Compatible use agreements from NRCS to give rights back to TNC
  - Land Valuation – what is WRP enrolled land worth
  - Sponsorship - Drainage District not TNC owns Levees and Pump Station
- Levee Issues, Cultural Sites, HTRW

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Resolution of Issues Being Finalized

- TNC to provide underlying FEE and a standard 5yr compatible use agreement with NRCS. NRCS will provide a letter of assurance on intent to renew the compatible use agreements through the 30 year easement.
- TNC will receive LERRD credits only for the value of the rights they still retain. Value of these lands based on comparable sales of lands with conservation easements in place.
- Project features on lands currently held in easement by the TDLD. Either local drainage district could be dissolved or including both the TDLD and TNC in the PPA.

Wilder Farm, April 2003

Thompson Lake at Emiquon, 3 December

Photo courtesy of Chris Young, Springfield State Journal R

Floodplain Restoration
Spunky Bottoms, IL

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Partnership Challenges / Opportunities

- This type of partnership could lead to major floodplain restoration (potential to repeat)
- Partnerships take time, but intent is clearly established
- Need continued support of high levels to resolve issues
- Don’t give up on the good ide projects